

LGBTQ Representation Shines Through in Final Space



Ash gets her new form from Invictus in Final Space

On May 8, *Final Space*, the mature animated comedy, drama, and space fantasy by comedian Olan Rogers, revealed that a character in the show's main cast was a lesbian. While this surprised some fans, the episode, and the show, has proven to be one of the best representations of LGBTQ characters in mature animation for some time.

Final Space, which premiered in February 2018 on TBS and began to air on Adult Swim starting in 2019, has been praised for its cast selection, comedy, originality, and uniqueness, with some reviewers even comparing it to *Adventure Time*, *BoJack Horseman*, or even *Futurama*. It begins by centering around an astronaut named Gary Goodspeed (voiced by Rogers) who is finishing his prison sentence for impersonating a space guard, to impress a girl named Quinn Ergon (voiced by Tika Sumpter). He meets an alien which he names Mooncake. With both pursued by the evil Lord Commander (voiced by David Tennant), they travel across the universe.

They meet people along the way, such as Gary's past-and-current love interest, Quinn, two cat-like aliens named Little Cato (voiced by Steven Yeun) and Avocado (voiced by Coty Galloway), a humanoid alien named Ash Graven (voiced by Ashly Burch), and another alien

named Fox (voiced by Ron Funches). This motley crew tries to figure out the secret behind a realm known as Final Space and more about themselves in the process.

Burch, a former writer for *Adventure Time*, voiced Enid, a bisexual woman in *OK K.O.!: Let's Be Heroes*, a non-binary Gem woman named Rutile Twins in *Steven Universe*, consisting of two Gem women, a lesbian woman name Lainey in *The Loud House* who has a girlfriend (Alice), Molly McGee, the Thai-American protagonist of the upcoming all-ages animated series, *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, along with various characters in *Glitch Techs*, *Adventure Time*, and *We Bare Bears*. This makes it even more interesting that she voiced a LGBTQ character in *Final Space*.

By the third season, Gary, and the ship crew, who entered Final Space to save Quinn, are trying to leave, but face challenges along the way from powerful beings known as Titans, the newly reincarnated Lord Commander, and a cosmic entity of an undetermined gender named Invictus (voiced by Vanessa Marshall).

The eighth episode of the season, titled "Forgiveness," revealed that Ash is a LGBTQ character. In the episode, she is grieving over the death of her brother, Fox, who was killed by Gary, but only because Invictus forced Gary to stab him, by possessing his robotic arm to carry out the horrifying killing. Trying to let out her anger, she comes across Evra, a genderless being voiced by Jasmin Savoy Brown.

In real life, Brown is a queer, [and biracial, woman](#). In the episode, Evra keeps changing her form before she finds a humanoid one which pleases Ash, who blushes at Evra. Both sit together watching lights across space [which resemble the aurora borealis](#), holding hands, together, in a romantic and heartwarming moment. Following this, she begins to repair her relationship with Gary.

In addition to the episode directly showing that Ash is a lesbian, in an earlier episode, "Arachnitects," she says everything about prom brings her to a "dark place." This includes getting rejected by a man named Jordan Hammerstein, declaring she hates him with all her guts, hinting at her sexual orientation, which is not "ambiguously bi," as some have incorrectly assumed, [but lesbian](#).



Evra and Ash bond in an episode of Final Space, an LGBTQ moment.

In [a podcast discussing the episode](#), Rogers confirmed Ash as a LGBTQ character, and noted that while they were unable to hire LGBTQ writers due to their limited budget, they would in the future. He also said that although he pushed for having an episode focusing on other characters coming out, instead of Ash, other writers, and David Sacks, argued for an episode about Ash.

[Rogers said](#) that Sacks, a co-writer for the episode and co-developer of the series with Rogers, wrote the episode while going through a lot of personal trauma and from a place of “two souls connecting to each other.” Even so, Rogers said that he would have liked to pace the episode better, but that the episode was “deeply personal” and came from coming from a meaningful place. He also described Evra, whose name he came out with, as a genderless shapeshifter, a “lifeform trapped in Final Space.” He added that if *Final Space* has another season, then he would like to expand the relationship between Evra and Ash.

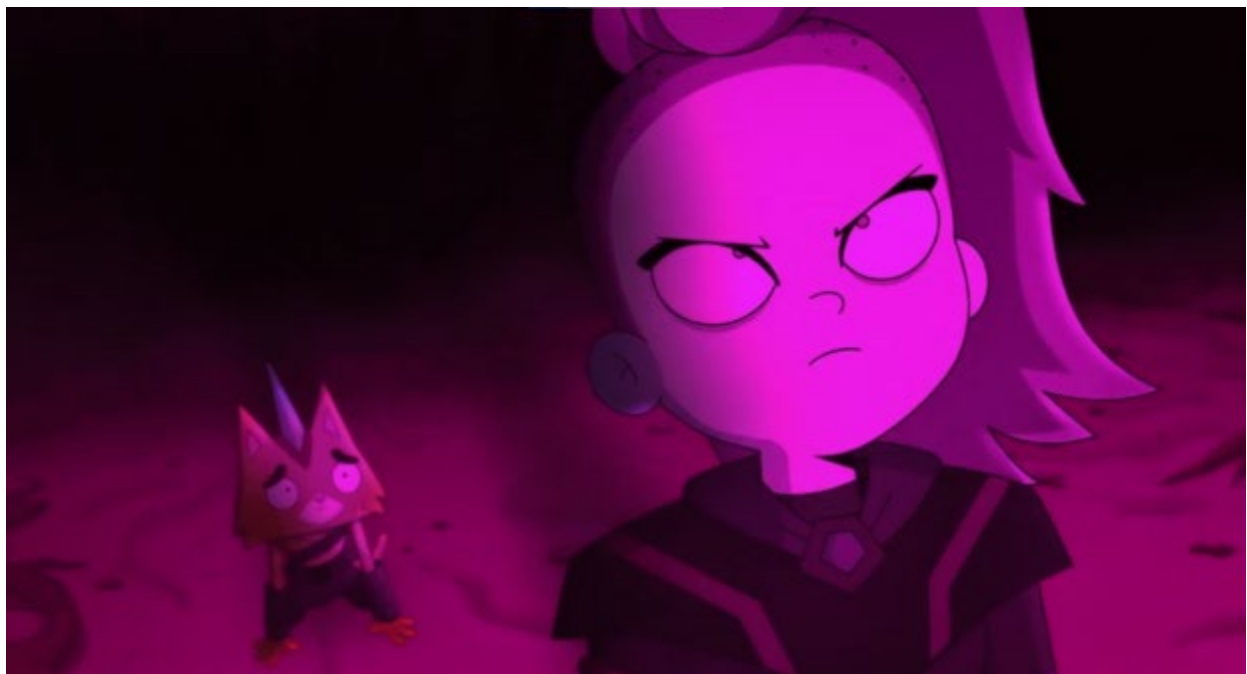
This is not the end of the story for Ash. She helps the crew by contacting her stepfather, Clarence, to open a dimensional gateway. He is successful, even though other crew members initially rejected her idea. In the process of trying to help all of them, Clarence is killed, as other beings try to get revenge on him due to their anger toward him.

Clarence, in his life, had an ex-wife, several wives who have since died, two adopted children (Fox and Ash), is implied to be in love with a character named General Cataloupe, and

had a crush on Gary's mother, Sheryl Goodspeed. Rogers, [in a Reddit comment](#), confirmed Clarence as bisexual, but also said there is a "gay character on the show" which would appear in Season 3, obliquely referring to Ash.

While some could say that Clarence's death means that he embodies the age-old bury your gays trope, [over 50 characters have died](#) during the course of the series, meaning that Clarence is not the only character to die. Even so, he is very selfish, meaning he is willing to cheat others, and is obsessed with money, which some could call stereotypical. Even so, he says, in his final episode, that he learned what he did was wrong, and wants to make up for his past mistakes by helping the crew.

As the season progresses forward, Ash is undoubtedly traumatized, like the rest of the crew, by the destruction of Earth due to the Lord Commander becoming a titan and emerging from the planet's core. In the final episode of the season, Ash pledges her loyalty to Invictus, the being which gave her dark energy powers and a new appearance halfway through season 3, declaring her friends to be traitors.



Ash pledges her loyalty to Invictus in Final Space

Even though, at the close of Season 3, Ash is now an antagonist, and a villain she does not fulfill common stereotypes or tropes. She isn't a token lesbian or a "butch lesbian," both

listed as tropes by TV Tropes. Instead, she comes closest to the trope of “Psycho Lesbian,” which the site defines as lesbian characters who are “exclusively psychotic and villainous,” even though lesbian characters can be as screwed up as any other character.

The manipulation of Ash, as such, has a strong parallel to what Zhan Tiri, as the Enchanted Girl, does to Cassandra “Cass” (voiced by Eden Espinosa) in the final season of *Tangled*. This is strengthened by the fact that Cass is lesbian-coded as [noted by The Mary Sue](#) and, more prominently, by an [openly lesbian storyboard revisionist](#) for *Tangled*, named Amber Vucinich, as she pointed out in a series of [tweets last year](#).

Both Cass and Ash are complex characters. Neither are one-dimensional, but have troubled pasts and experience trauma, trying to work through their feelings and thoughts about others in healthy ways, and, at times, destructive methods. They both engage in morally grey actions.

As for Ash, her alliance with a villain is no accident. Invictus plays [on triggers](#) for Ash’s trauma, just as Zhan Tri does with Cass. These triggers can [rear their ugly head](#), at times, with people lashing out, blaming others unfairly, retreating, or having their emotions flair, as it does for those who experience [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD).

What Ash is going through, whether she has PTSD or not, is not unique. The lives and memories of every *Final Space* character are scarred [with tragedy and trauma](#). Ash has come a long way since her first appearance in the beginning of Season 2, as an odd and strange girl, becoming more confident in herself and mature. She is currently over 19 years old, with Evra helping Ash grow as a person. Hopefully, Evra will help her recognize that she is in the wrong by allying herself with Invictus, and that she can change for the better, even if this takes a long time, on her own terms.

There is one more LGBTQ character in *Final Space* who has an important recurring role: Tribore Menendez. He is the leader of the Resistance and is, like Gary, voiced by Rogers. Some say he is genderfluid in part because of an episode where he notes that [his species flips gender twice a year](#), and the fact he has a child named Quatronostro (voiced by Oscar Montoya), an alien who only speaks Spanish.

Rogers has called Tribore “narcissi-sexual” because he [“loves himself a little too much.”](#) Tribore ends up saving the crew in the final episode of season 3, opening the dimensional portal, allowing them to leave Final Space. Even so, his character, which is a bit annoying and

obnoxious, may be a bit stereotypical, even as he can be a competent leader and fighter at times. Rogers also admitted that Tribore, along with Clarence, is not “good enough representation for LGBTQ community.” I can’t agree more. Furthermore, Val/entina Romanyszyn in *Gen:LOCK*, [who comes out as genderfluid](#) in the show’s fourth episode, and is voiced by Asia Kate Dillon, a [pansexual](#) and [non-binary](#) actor, is much better representation than Tribore by a long shot.

If a fourth season of *Final Space* is produced and aired, hopefully, Ash is redeemed, working to win back the trust of her friends who she doomed to their deaths. The next season will likely show Little Cato as a gay character, something which Rogers supports. In fact, before the episode “Forgiveness” aired, in [comments on the official Final Space Twitter account](#), he noted two LGBTQ characters in *Final Space* in upcoming episodes, saying they tried to do their best.

Knowing what we know now, we can piece together he was saying that Sacks advocated for Ash be shown as a LGBTQ character, while [Rogers advocated](#) for someone else (Little Cato). In any case, Rogers said that the door is open for Ash’s lesbianism [to be expanded](#) in a possible fourth season, and promised to “[bring up Little Cato again](#) in the writers room.” This would be a boon for fans of gay Little Cato and a positive to have a main character of an animated show be gay, especially a mature animated series.

Recent years have shown a gay couple of [two secondary characters in *Disenchantment*](#) (Odval and Sorcerio), the LGBTQ characters in *Magical Girl Friendship Squad* (Daisy and Alex), a genderfluid character in *Duncanville* (Mia Abara), and a possibly bisexual character in [Star Trek: Lower Decks](#) (Beckett Mariner), in recent years, to name a few. With the whole hullabaloo around the recent *Q-Force* trailer, *Final Space* has the possibility, and promise, to move forward mature animation in a better and more inclusive direction.

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